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ACTION: [REDACTED] APPROVALS: [REDACTED]

POLICY

Unless you perceive objection, you should seek early occasion to explain to Foreign Minister or other appropriate official how this Government has viewed Soviet policy with respect to Cuban crisis.

Beginning in middle of summer, there were a number of indications that Khrushchev and Soviet Government had concluded there was no possibility Soviet Union could obtain its objectives with respect to

Berlin through negotiation. There were also indications that Khrushchev felt too personally committed to achievement of his objectives in Berlin to retreat, as well as indications that factors which were pushing Soviet Government to a resolution of this problem, were increasing (situation in East Germany, Communist Chinese pressure, etc.) and that Soviet Union had decided showdown on Berlin problem was inevitable within some months. There were also indications that Soviet Government and Khrushchev personally had developed doubts as to whether they could win in a showdown and that alternatives might be either an ignominious retreat or nuclear war.

Soviet

Drafted by:

S/AL - Ambassador Thompson: sr

10/24/62

Telegraphic transmission and
classification approved by:

S - The Secretary

EUR- Mr. Tyler

DEPARTMENT OF STATE P-900042 MR. Rogers

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REVIEWED BY:

John

DATE 3/3/04

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Soviet Government privately and later publicly stated that while it would insist upon conclusive discussion of Berlin problem in relatively short period, it would not do so until after American Congressional elections. It maintained this position even though it was made clear to them that so far as US Government concerned, elections had no bearing on the problem.

A number of assurances were given by Soviet Government both privately and publicly that it would not arm Cuba with offensive weapons. This was not / merely dialectical discussion but specific assurances against weapons that could reach the US. Tass statement of September 11 said that Soviet Union had no need to take such action. This statement, which was largely concerned with Cuban situation, related it to question of German peace treaty and other international problems.

When Gromyko saw President October 18, he made standard but strong statement about Berlin and German peace treaty issues and then made following statements about Cuba. Soviet assistance to Cuba "pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba" that "training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling defensive armaments was by no means offensive" and that "if it were otherwise, the Soviet Government would have never become involved in rendering such assistance."

Khrushchev indicated to Ambassador Kohler that he had virtually decided to come to UN meeting in New York latter part of November and

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Gromyko in his conversation with President confirmed this, although no specific date was set.

When Soviet action in arming Cuba with offensive nuclear missiles became evident, it was because of developments set forth above that this Government tended believe Soviet action was probably primarily geared to showdown on Berlin, intended to be timed with Khrushchev's arrival in US and completion of installation of these missiles in Cuba.

Addressees may discreetly use general line foregoing and particularly substance Gromyko's statement to President on Berlin on October 18, in background talks with foreign correspondents.

FYL Purpose of this message is to improve understanding that any Berlin crisis will be due to Soviet action. In point of fact, Cuban crisis may well have effect of improving overall position of West in Berlin through clear-cut evidence of our resolution.

End

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